

The Book Club of California

QUARTERLY

News-Letter

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FOUNDED in 1912, The Book Club of California is a non-profit association of booklovers and collectors who have a special interest in Pacific Coast history, literature, and fine printing. Its chief aims are to further the interests of book collectors and to promote an understanding and appreciation of fine books.

The Club is limited to 900 members. When vacancies exist membership is open to all who are in sympathy with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Regular membership involves no responsibilities beyond payment of the annual dues. Dues date from the month of the member's election. Regular membership is \$18.00; Sustaining \$30.00; Patron, \$100.00.

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The Book Club of California: Its Impress on Fine Printing

By James D. Hart*

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA extends back only to 1912 and yet in some ways that date seems to belong to a distant past. It was the year in which the *Titanic* was lost and the Piltdown Man was found. The Grand Central Railway Terminal was constructed in 1912 and Jean Webster's smiling story of an orphaned girl, *Daddy-Long-Legs*, was a best seller of the year. In 1912 the first newsreel was filmed and St. John Hornby prepared to issue the twenty-eighth book of his Ashendene Press.

At the time the Book Club was founded, the incunabula of modern fine printing belonged to the past, but it was a very recent past to which they belonged. The Club came into being just one generation after the father of modern fine printing started his career, for 1912 is exactly twenty-one years after that January day of 1891 when William Morris pulled the first proof on his Albion press. Morris was dead and his press was closed well before the Book Club was founded, but his ideals directly affected it. The beginnings of the Book Club were closer yet to the other great founder of modern fine printing, Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, and his aesthetic in *The Ideal Book*, issued in 1901, significantly influenced the Book Club. By the time the Book Club came into being, the great types of The Doves Press had washed and rusted away from the bed of the Thames to which Cobden-Sanderson consigned them, but he and the Book Club knew and respected one another. So it is that some bibliophiles are fortunate enough to own copies of Club publications signed by him and bearing his handsome little book label, and the Club files contain a letter he wrote to its president declaring that the ninth publication, John Henry Nash's *Kasidah*, had a title page "beautifully balanced and enriched with color and design." St. John Hornby, of course, was an elder contemporary.

*James D. Hart is Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. He is at present Chairman of the Book Club's Publications Committee. This talk was given at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library this Spring.

In was in 1912, then, six thousand miles away from the English center of modern fine printing, and only six years away from their own destructive earthquake and fire, that some San Franciscans had the audacity and the vision to believe that on this farthest Western coast they could stimulate their own center for fine printing and other activities of the bibliophile. The best place to make this interest known, they decided, was at the Panama Pacific International Exposition, projected for 1915 ostensibly to celebrate the completion of the canal linking the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, but in large part designed to display the rebirth of a once-devastated San Francisco.

The idea of a major exhibition of fine printing and rare books seems to have come mainly from Edward Robeson Taylor, a civic-conscious polymath. Seventy-four years old in 1912, Taylor had been a Californian since 1862, when as a young man he had begun work as a typesetter. Since then Taylor had gone on to become a physician and a lawyer, and then San Francisco's post-earthquake reform mayor from 1907 to 1909. More than all this, he was a poet and a book collector. When the fire of April 18, 1906, began to approach Taylor's home on Webster and California streets, he had his son dig a large hole in the backyard, which was then lined and covered with rugs, and in it Taylor buried the family valuables. First of these was a copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. The attitude that caused Taylor to obtain and preserve that volume doubtless not only inspired the son, Edward DeWitt Taylor, to become a distinguished typographer, but it betokened the father's appreciation of fine printing. So in 1912 Dr. Taylor, accompanied by William R. K. Young, a local business executive and avid book collector, John Henry Nash, already a well known printer, and James D. Blake, an assistant in Newbegin's Book Shop, went to see Charles C. Moore, the president of the projected Exposition and himself a book collector. After they urged him to include an important exhibition of books in the plans of the Exposition, he suggested that the Exhibit Committee would be more impressed if the proposal came from an organization rather than from individuals. So the four men went out to lunch, and a drink too, I suppose, and returned fully organized as a book-collectors' club.

They modeled themselves on the Grolier and Caxton Clubs and thought at first that their society should also bear the name of a famous printer. They toyed with "The Gutenberg Club," "The Elzevier Society," and "The Aldine Club." Finally they decided on the less romantic and more descriptive name of The Book Club of California. Soon these founding fathers gathered to themselves a few more moving spirits:

Albert M. Bender, the effusive insurance agent who helped all good cultural causes of the city, Alfred Sutro, a leading lawyer and bibliophile too, Isaac O. Upham, another book collector, Will Sparks, a local artist who served as secretary, and even a lady, Mrs. Laurens Maynard, who seems to have had many talents for she was soon appointed to more committees than any other Board member, serving not only the House Committee and the Library Committee, but also the Auditing Committee. Within a few months they issued a roster of 58 charter members, including Dr. Taylor's two sons, one a graduate student at Harvard enrolled in the classes of D. B. Updike.

The membership list appeared in a nice pamphlet printed by Taylor, Nash & Taylor, obviously influenced by Cobden-Sanderson. It set forth the elaborate Constitution and By-laws which described the purposes of the Club as: "The study of letters and the promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books. These objects shall comprehend the occasional publication of books designed to illustrate, promote and encourage letters and book production, the acquisition and maintenance of proper quarters for the safe-keeping of the properties of the Club and for the holding of meetings, lectures, exhibitions and entertainments of whatever kind falling within the purposes of the Club." It didn't take the Club long to get around to publications and exhibitions although, curiously enough, it never had one at the Panama Pacific International Exposition! But even before it printed a book or put one on display, the Club sponsored lectures relevant to two subjects that have been major concerns ever since: fine printing and California history and literature. Dr. Taylor represented the first in a talk on William Morris, probably accompanied by an exhibition of the exhumed *Chaucer*. The noted bibliographer Robert E. Cowan dealt with the second subject in a talk that in course of time led on to the Club's first publication.

In its Minutes of June 18, 1913, the Committee on Programme recommended "that Club undertake the publication of a bibliography of books dealing with the history of California and the American Pacific West from the earliest writings to the San Francisco fire of 1906," pointing out that "there is real need for a work of this kind. It will prove invaluable alike to the student and the collector of Californiana. No relatively complete bibliography of California has ever been issued." Anticipating some objections by more aesthetically inclined members, the report headed them off by saying that "Your Committee, while fully aware of the desirability of making beautiful reprints of classic works, is convinced that such action can well be deferred until the duty of crystallizing the

rapidly disappearing data concerning the history of the Pacific States shall have been performed."

The Committee, consisting of Young, Blake, and John Henry Nash, persuaded the eight members of the Board of Directors, and in 1914 appeared Cowan's *A Bibliography of the History of California and the Pacific West 1510-1906*. It was an impressive undertaking. The printers, naturally enough, were Taylor, Nash, & Taylor. Their format was a small folio, their paper handmade Arches, and their type a handsetting of Goudy's new Kennerley with specially designed initials, printed in orange-red, showing California poppies twined around the capital letters. The binding was in Fabriano pale blue paper over boards, with a linen back, on which was pasted a two-colored label. The covers enclosed 356 pages, as many as the Club was to include in its next seven publications put together. The volume was not only sumptuous in appearance but significant in text since it presented the first real bibliography of writings bearing on the history of California and did so with fine notes on the various works. Nevertheless, it took a good deal of salesmanship to try to dispose of the 250 copies at twenty dollars apiece to the limited membership.

The need to make sales while yet preserving the good manners of the time led President Taylor to write to James D. Phelan, his predecessor as Mayor of San Francisco: "The work is one that must directly appeal to Californians, especially those who have made the history of our State a special study. It is thought that you would be particularly interested; and in order to afford you an opportunity to inspect the book leisurely and critically, a copy is being sent to your residence." At the same time that Senator Phelan found the unordered book in his mail he also received a letter urging him to change from his regular ten dollar annual membership to become the Club's third life member with a payment of two hundred and fifty dollars. Club records are not clear whether he did so (it would have been a bad investment, for he died in 1930), but they make amply clear that a full year after publication almost half the edition of Cowan's *Bibliography* remained on the Club's shelves. A hundred still lingered there in 1916.

Two years after the printing of the Cowan bibliography the Book Club essayed its second publication. This was a more cautious 14-page production but one dedicated to another of the Club's concerns: regional literature. Its text was Edwin Markham's "The Man With the Hoe," the famous blank-verse protest against the degradation of exploited labor that had won the author a reputation and a prize when first printed in the San Francisco *Examiner* seventeen years earlier. Now instead of

appearing on newsprint it was issued on a handmade, water-marked foreign paper. On it John Henry Nash, now possessed of his own firm, printed an elaborate book in three colors with a floral border surrounded by another border of rules that even was carried over to the tops of the otherwise blank flyleaves. The thin but elegant book was sent gratis to the 200 or so members with a suggestion that some patrons (probably including poor Senator Phelan) purchase the remaining 75 copies at two dollars apiece. In a very minimal way the book was a first edition since in the last line of the second stanza Markham changed "menace" to "danger," in order, as he said, to "clarify and energize the line." So delighted was Markham by the handsetting of his masterpiece that in August 1916 he wrote the new president, W. R. K. Young, in a lofty style to thank him for "the high honor that you and your literary circle have conferred upon us. We have appealed to Oberon to send his fairies to dance with dreams upon your nightly pillow!"

Even before Markham loosed his covey of fairies on the President's pillow, the Club took seriously its charge of promoting handsome editions of California literature. In 1915, a year prior to the printing of *The Man with the Hoe*, the Board polled its members to determine which three of twenty selected stories by Bret Harte they would most want to have enshrined in a fine format. They chose "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," and "Tennessee's Partner." Combined, these made up the third Book Club publication, also issued in 1916. Once again Nash was responsible for its design, although the colophon announced that the printing was by the Blair-Murdock Company. The binding was like that of the first two books, but in this one Nash did not give way to his usual elaborate decorations and rules.

Still other California authors were represented in some of the succeeding works. These were *Thirty-Five Sonnets*, by George Sterling, printed in 1917 by Taylor & Taylor in a chaste style, somewhat reminiscent of Cobden-Sanderson; Ina Coolbrith's *California*, a poem prepared for the state university's Commencement Day that Nash presented in 1918 in elaborate ruled green borders incorporating curiously stylized poppy decorations; *Odes and Sonnets* by Sterling's protégé, Clark Ashton Smith, also issued in 1918; and three short stories by Ambrose Bierce, whose texts the Directors seemed to have decided upon themselves, but whose setting in 1920 Nash handled in a style somewhat reminiscent of the Bret Harte volume.

The Bierce book was obviously the result of a motion made by Albert Bender at the February 1920 Board meeting, proposing that there be

issued an anthology containing a representative story by each of the following five regional writers: Morrow, Bierce, Norris, Milne, and Dawson. A story by the obscure William Chambers Morrow was finally represented by the Club in its Keepsake series of 1936, titled *The California Literary Pamphlets*, which also included work by Emma Frances Dawson, already the author of a Club book printed in 1921. The more distinguished Frank Norris had to wait until 1956 to get on the Club's list of books, and then he was represented by a gathering of his *Letters*. But as for Milne, so easily cited by Bender, who was that? Not the author of *Winnie the Pooh*, obviously. A little research discovers the writer to be a lady, Frances Margaret Milne, born in Ireland in 1846 but long a resident of San Luis Obispo, which she served as librarian and memorialized in "Passing of the Village," a locally printed poem depicting the disruption of that tranquil town by the coming of the railroad. More research might turn up a short story written by this sweet singer of San Luis Obispo, but it hardly seems worthwhile.

The first ten volumes issued by the Club showed it to be amply loyal to local literature, even if it did not preserve Mrs. Milne's fiction. These books included the initial bibliography and six works by writers of the area. Only three books were drawn from literatures larger than that of the state. They were *The Vision of Mirzah*, by Addison, *The Kasidah*, a poem in couplets by Sir Richard Burton, and Rabindranath Tagore's essays titled *Nationalism*. The first two texts were printed by Nash, the second quite elaborately, but the third, although it used the Club's now nearly uniform binding style of pale blue boards with linen back, internally seemed too conventional and commercial for a Book Club publication. It was printed on handmade paper, but it was set in linotype by the Norwood Press of Massachusetts and was simply a variant of the commercial edition published by Macmillan. Perhaps because of its commonplace appearance the Club never again turned to a printer who was not a Californian and therefore personally unknown to it.

The Club's selection of authors was nearly as provincial as its choice of printers. The 1920's began with the publication of the Club's tenth book, the Bierce collection, and so continued the tradition of sponsoring local literature. The ten books that came after it were also by a solid string of California authors whom the Directors permitted to be interrupted only by Jesus Christ and Solomon. That is, with the exception of the authors of *The Sermon on the Mount* and *The Song of Songs* (respectively, publications 15 and 18), all the writers of publications 11 to 20 lived around the San Francisco Bay.

First in date of publication came Sara Bard Field's *The Vintage Festival*, describing the annual celebrations of the wine of Saint Helena. This was followed by a dramatic poem, *Lilith*, by George Sterling, itself succeeded by a tale titled *A Gracious Visitation*, written by Emma Frances Dawson, which had first been printed in San Francisco in 1897 but was now resurrected in part because the kindly Albert Bender wanted to help its poor and aged author. The next publications of the decade included the *Prayer* that the popular Charles K. Field had delivered as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Stanford fifteen years earlier; a fine reminiscent description of San Francisco in 1875 written by an unidentified man named Samuel Williams; a really significant original work, *The Letters of Ambrose Bierce*, a 206-page book edited by the Club's Secretary, Bertha Clark Pope; an edition of the *Letters and Papers* of Oscar Weil, a local composer and music critic; and, finally, a second booklet of California poetry sent gratis to all members, this one a facsimile of the manuscript of Bret Harte's *Dickens in Camp*, a touching tribute written upon the occasion of the novelist's death.

The printing of these ten books maintained the high level of the first decade, and even improved upon it, for there was no Norwood among the new printers. With the exception of that Massachusetts press, all of the first ten books had been the productions of two printers: John Henry Nash and Taylor & Taylor. Indeed, the two were one at the time that the initial Book Club publication appeared with a colophon reading Taylor, Nash & Taylor. Of the remaining nine books, six were by Nash and two by Taylor & Taylor, so that, although the Club patronized the press in the family of its former president, it more consistently aided the new press of Nash, helping to establish him as a leading printer not only of California but of the world to which it sent its books. The eleventh and twelfth publications of the Club continued the established pattern, the first being printed by Nash and the second by Taylor & Taylor.

With its thirteenth book the Club once again showed that it was sensitive to new talent and ready to sponsor it. To print *A Gracious Visitation* the Club turned to two young brothers, Edwin and Robert Grabhorn, who had moved from Indianapolis to San Francisco a few months before and set up a shop on the fifth floor of a loft building on Kearny Street near Market. So while Albert Bender aided an aged author through the publication of her text in this book, he also assisted two young printers. The Grabhorns had issued some broadsides and leaflets, mainly to advertise their existence, and they had essayed one little ten-page booklet, but the Club publication was their first real book. It ran to 72

pages of handset Garamond type printed on handmade paper, all presented in a style more reserved than that for which they later became famous. As if fearing to be novel, the Grabhorns set their title in the same face that Nash had used for his running heads in *The Vintage Festival* and printed them in an identical red. This uncharacteristic cautiousness was so well received that they were asked to print the next book, Field's *Prayer*. This time they were even more on guard and even more imitative. Again they used Garamond (a type never afterwards used by them in a Book Club work), but more than that they used ruled borders, and on the title and on head pieces they employed floral decorations reminiscent of those by Ray Coyle, John Henry Nash's house artist. One could hardly tell the book from one by Nash. It is not surprising that, years later, Ed Grabhorn inscribed a copy with the rueful remark, "One of the indiscretions of my youth."

The Grabhorns' next work for the Club, *The City of the Golden Gate*, was slightly more independent in style but still very conservative in layout and typography. However, its hand-marbled binding paper of orange, brown, and gold, like that of *A Gracious Visitation*, was more exotic than the covers that were designed by the Club's other printers, as was the label of its spine, in which gold letters appeared on a black background. The book also marks another departure in that it is both the Grabhorns' and the Club's first publication of Californiana which is a work neither of *belles lettres* nor bibliography, but rather an account of a past period written by a plain person who experienced it.

These four books that the Grabhorns printed in 1920 and 1921 were followed the next year by the first one that unmistakably established their own style. This was *The Song of Songs*. The Goudy Antique type printed in black and red, complemented by strong blue initials drawn by Joseph Sinel, gave the book great warmth and vigor. The drawing by Harold von Schmidt on the opening text page was perfectly suited in character to the type, for the erotic tone of the text was bodied forth not only by the depiction of the nude couple kissing but by the landscape setting in which the bushes themselves assumed phallic forms. Moreover, the presswork also fitted the text for, unlike that of his earlier works or those of Nash or Taylor and Taylor, in this one Ed Grabhorn did not merely let the type kiss the paper lightly and discreetly, but now it was embedded in it through a passionate embrace that the eyes can see and the fingers feel. The strong masculine approach of the Grabhorns is at last fully evident in a book that in every way suits typography to text. Naturally enough it was among the volumes selected by the American

Institute of Graphic Arts in 1923 when it presented its first "Fifty Books of the Year" exhibition. No wonder that years later Ed Grabhorn inscribed a copy with the remark, "This still remains one of the best books I have ever printed."

The Club quickly recognized the quality of the Grabhorns and selected them to print eleven of the sixteen books issued in the beginning of its second decade, from 1922 to 1928. The remaining five were all by John Henry Nash, and by chance or by intention they were all publications of California literature. Two of them were major works, not only by being the most sizable Club publications of the period but by being of great literary importance. One was the collection of Bierce's letters, the other was *Continent's End*, an anthology of contemporary California poets selected by George Sterling and two younger writers, Genevieve Taggard and James Rorty. Had the book's 240 pages not been so long in the making, it would have included the first of Robinson Jeffers' mature poems to get between boards. But even if it barely missed this distinction, the volume established a close connection with California's leading poet that lasted to his death thirty-five years later. In 1927 he was made an Honorary Member "in view of his recent contributions to Western literature and of his willingness to allow the Club to bring out whatever of his work it desired," and in 1928, 1935, 1940, 1947, 1956, and 1961 the Club printed some of his writing in book or leaflet form. *Continent's End*, inspired by Albert Bender out of his good-hearted concern not only for a poet of the stature of Jeffers but for bards then little known and now hardly better remembered than Mrs. Milne, was nevertheless a work of consequence. It included poets with names that should be memorable even if their works were not, like Myrtokleia Childe, Hazel Havermale, Harry Noyes Pratt, and Anna Kalfus Spero, but it also contained five poems by Jeffers, and lyrics by Maxwell Anderson, Mary Austin, Leonard Bacon, three Benés, Stella Benson, Witter Bynner, Hildegard Flanner, Robert Nathan, and Charles Erskine Scott Wood. Another very different volume of poetry served as John Henry Nash's last production of the period. This was an elaborate rendering in letterpress and facsimile typescript and manuscript of George Sterling's *The Testimony of the Suns*, with marginal comment by his mentor Ambrose Bierce that afforded a significant insight into the shaping of a poem.

The Grabhorns' books during this period of the Club's second decade were both more various and more classic works. They included three selections from the Bible, two letters by explorers setting forth first-hand views of the New World, and three texts related to bookmaking, which

varied from a Renaissance English bishop's declaration of his love of learning to a brief essay on old French title pages. The formats themselves ranged from a folio fifteen inches high and ten wide to a little work under six inches tall and less than four wide. The typography suited the subjects, and yet the style was frequently marked by a treatment reminiscent of the *Song of Songs*. That book had its purposeful companion volume in *The Gentle Cynic*, a rendering of Ecclesiastes, issued in 1927, but other Grabhorn publications also used types that imparted somewhat of an antique style, three of them being set in Poliphilus, enhanced by large colored initials, while two of them employed the even more antiquated Gothique Ancienne, also with bright initials. The most distinguished of the books was *The Letter of Amerigo Vespucci*. On a sturdy Van Gelder paper, the printers used an Italian Old Style with plenty of bite and then enhanced their basic text type with display type that had the feeling of the period. The title page was dominated by a hand-colored facsimile of an ancient map whose Renaissance flavor was borne out on the text pages through decorative initials adapted from contemporary sources by Valenti Angelo, the young Italian reared in San Francisco who did so much for the Press during his period as artist in residence. The book was justifiably awarded a gold medal by the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

Another notable contribution of the Grabhorns to the Club's books of this period was the one titled *Aldus Pius Manutius* (1924), consisting of an essay by Theodore De Vinne on the great Venetian printer and an inserted page from his *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. As there were but 192 such pages, that was the number of copies offered for sale, the smallest edition ever issued by the Book Club. Since 250 copies of the book were printed, the Club had 58 left over for three decades until facsimile pages were printed to insert in the remaining volumes that sold quickly upon issuance in 1955. (*continued next issue*)



This volume is printed in 12pt Monotype Spectrum

Toni Savage of Leicester, England

By *Albert Sperisen*

AS READERS have observed, we have been quite interested in the productions of Toni Savage and the group of young English printers who make up the Leicester scene. In our last review (Winter, 1969) we conjectured on the source of all this—and the how and why this interesting and vital group of young printing came about. We guessed wrong on several important points and Toni Savage, the guiding genius of this young group (he'll probably dispute this) wrote us at some length. So for the record, these are the facts:

My first booklet was printed for the Orpheus Press which was owned by Douglas Martin, alias Dr Orpheus. As it turned out, this was the last piece of printing I did for this now defunct press. (An article about Orpheus appeared in the January 1969 issue of *The American Book Collector*.)

The Pandora Press was in partnership with Rigby Graham, Patricia Green and Ben Trut. Here I was mainly concerned with combining type and illustration to form attractive and lively books with Rigby Graham as the artist. Rigby Graham is a truly great artist and illustrator. He lectures at the Art Teachers Department of the Leicester College of Art. There is *no* connection between this college and the private press movement centered in Leicester.

The Offcut Press started as a combination with Duine (male) Campbell, founder of the Black Knight Press (formerly of Bath) and myself to swop ideas on design and printing techniques. The first few books, aided by Sheila Cafferky and Patricia Harris, were so interesting that we decided to offer Offcut facilities to any private press owner who wished to participate. Barbara Jones, author and illustrator, and Peter Paul Piech, an American living in England owner of the Taurus Press, accepted our invitation and their first booklet was *Twice So Fair*.*

The New Broom Press is my own. I can choose poets, writers, artists to suit myself; and the general design and layout of the book is left entirely to me. At this point I would like to state that if all the titles I

*Mr. Savage had sent the Club a copy, and has added—this invitation to collaborate, is open to any member of the Book Club of California who wishes to dirty his or her fingers in producing or helping to produce a booklet, pamphlet or whatever, when they are over here on holiday. Food, bed and badly made coffee will also be provided.

have printed were actually listed, the Private Press Index would be greatly enlarged. Often I am included in colophons of weird press names, mainly because I helped set the type for many of these printed by visitors to my press.

And, if this isn't enough, Toni Savage and Rigby Graham have produced and published the "World's smallest magazine"—*Fishpaste*. Each copy was printed on a standard blank postcard. The front was invariably an illustration or engraving by Graham (some hand-colored) and the reverse was the printed work of a contemporary poet. Mr Savage sent us an example, the colophon for this series.

There are other private presses in the area. The best known is the Brewhouse Press of Trevor Hickman and Rigby Graham. But this press has all of its typesetting and printing done by professional printers. These are beautiful items and more expensive. The press is an outlet for Rigby Graham and Penelope Holt, Graham's wife. In addition, Graham has his own Cog Press plus a student magazine project at Leicester College called *Cacophony*. The Rosemary Press and the Orion Press have printed, so far, only one booklet each. And, a fellow near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, brought his press to show at the Private Press Book Exhibition last year. It was completely hand made with a glass tympan. It also worked and his first book will be out shortly—about 20 copies. He wanted to call the press the Sow's Ear but his wife made him change it to the Silk Purse Press.

All of this activity (and productivity) would suggest a very young man—or an ageless old retired gentleman. Neither is the case. From a reproduction of a painting of Toni, we gather that he must be in his early forties—he can't be younger. Sometime in his early life he spent a period in Italy as a bel canto tenor—an understudy to the immortal Gigli! And today, he earns his bread and board as a capstan (turret in America) lathe setter-operator for a large Midlands tool-maker! And for a hobby, Toni collects early "street literature"!!

Recent Library Acquisitions

By Albert Sperisen

THE CLUB is the happy recipient of a rather remarkable piece of private printing by member Dr. Edmund E. Simpson at his Blackwood Press in Sacramento. Unfortunately, only 85 copies were printed and David Magee

is handling a few copies for sale at \$10, plus tax. This handsome folder is printed from hand set Bembo, in two colors (three, if you include the colophon bug) on a treadle and hand-inked C & P press, on mold made paper from England. The design is faultless, the typesetting excellent and it is a good job of press work. It is infinitely better than most professional work, and *superb* by any amateur standards.

This is a “leaf” book and each copy contains an original leaf from the first English translation, 1634, of the works of Ambroise Paré, probably the most famous physician and surgeon of the 16th century. (From the introduction, we learn that Paré was the surgeon to four French kings in succession!) The printer of this English translation is not mentioned by Dr. Simpson in his introduction—and it is just as well. Less than a handful of good printing was done in that century, least of all fine printing.

Our congratulations to our doctor member, and the Club’s thanks for an extremely fine example of private press printing.

* * *

RECENTLY, FROM ENGLAND, we were quoted an unusual item for our library . . . a three-volume photo-lithographed facsimile of the first edition of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, reproduced in Barcelona, Spain, in 1871-1873 and 1874. This appeared to us to be a very early “first” in photo-lithography, but since we could find no record of this work, we asked the opinion of two other antiquarian bookdealers in England. The work was unknown to either one, so we ordered it. After an unusually long delay caused by one of London’s dock strikes, the books arrived. The three volumes are beautifully cased (in the Spanish manner) in full mottled calf, richly gold tooled with leather labels in red and green, all in fine condition. The first volume is a complete facsimile of the first edition of 1605. Volume two is also a complete facsimile but of the first edition Second Part, 1615, and the third volume is the Notes of 1633. These are indeed early examples of photo-lithography—called here “Fototypographia”—but they are not the first. In 1858, a privately printed edition of *Hamlet* was reproduced in facsimile for the Duke of Devonshire in an edition of 40 copies. (This was the *second* photo-lithographed book—but the first complete facsimile.) However, this example could be considered a “sport” or just an experiment. Certainly, it was not an example of publishing, and it had little or no effect on publishers or lithographers, except the Government got into the act. The Ordnance Survey Depart-

ment of the British Government developed in 1860 "Photozincography," the first successful use of zinc in lieu of stone. This metal plate allowed a more flexible use of the medium and together with photography brought about a complete change in map-making. And, to its credit, The War Office willingly revealed this secret to all European nations—a truly rare occasion. (We suspect that our Spanish edition of *Don Quixote* owes its existence to this generous gift, as it probably is reproduced from zinc plates.) But this bit of historical background tells us nothing about the basic invention which made all this possible.

Strangely, this beginning was the work of one misguided American genius, a Joseph Dixon of Massachusetts, who in 1840 successfully transferred a photo-line image to a lithographic stone for the first time and printed a fairly large edition. His secret was lost for a few years, but in *The Scientific American* for April, 1854. Dixon revealed his secret after he was released from prison. (The fairly large edition which he printed was counterfeit dollar notes!)

Our Spanish edition will do nicely as an early example of photo-lithography. However, we would like to have the 1861 edition of *Legends of St. Swithin and Sancta Maria Aegyptiaca*, with an essay by John Earle as published by Longmans in London. This book is not mentioned by Ruari McLean—nor is it in the *Mind of Man* catalogue. It is, we believe, the first commercially published photo-lithographed book.

Book Reviews

DAVIES, DAVID W. *An Enquiry into the Reading of the Lower Classes*. Pasadena, California: Grant Dahlstrom, 1970. xvi, 92 p. illus. 250 copies, in Belgian linen and figured papers, at \$25; 750 copies, in cloth, at \$18.

This delightful account of reading taste (or lack of it) among the British lower classes in the first half of the nineteenth century shares something in common with two earlier works: R. D. Altick's *The English Common Reader* and James D. Hart's *The Popular Book in America*. But the scope of this book is more limited and consequently more sharply focused to evoke the spirit of the results of the spread of literacy during this time. The somewhat melancholy constituency of this reading public is examined, and some of the books and ballads and pamphlets appealing to this public are discussed. The book talks about the various uplift societies which sought from time to time to improve the taste and the literature of the lower calsses. The most famous of these was the Society for the

Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and its famous *Penny Cyclopaedia*, but there were also such fascinatingly named societies as Magdalen Hospital for the Admission of Seduced Females, Welsh Hospital for Decayed Natives of Wales, and the Society for the Relief of Authors in Distress. These societies, especially the S.D.U.K., aided the cause of literacy by the issuance of cheap literature, but enterprising private publishers soon entered the field and gave the public the sensational and non-uplifting reading fare it wanted. Some of this colorful literature is described and quoted from.

The last, and most entertaining, part of the book deals with the famous James Catnach, who specialized in street literature—ballads, cocks, and dying speeches. This section succeeds most of all in giving the feeling of bustling, brawling early nineteenth-century London. From his shop in Monmouth Court, Seven Dials, Catnach issued the broadsides (cocks) and booklets devoted to sensational elopements, murders, and similar dramatic events. Some of the productions of his press ridiculed competitors, and he was sued more than once; he was also jailed on one occasion. These items were hawked by chaunters and patterers, a close knit profession with a highly colorful jargon (some of which has remained in the street language of today).

Mr. Davies ends this excellent account with: "In short, poor people, both those who had money and those who didn't, were reading what we of the lower classes usually read—except in our day of course, we don't have to—we see it on television."

R.E.B.

ROBERT D. HARLAN, *John Henry Nash: The Biography of a Career*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970. xi, 167 pp. Illustrated. \$7.50.

During the first two decades of its history John Henry Nash printed more books for the Club than all other printers combined; hence the publication of this, the first full-scale survey of the man and his work, is likely to be of particular interest to members.

Based mainly on the Nash correspondence and other documents at the University of California Library at Berkeley, but with much material drawn from other sources, the book presents a well-rounded picture both of the man himself and the conditions under which he lived and worked. What emerges is an engaging portrait of a highly complex individual, one who combined the craftsman's proper pride in his work and by no means minor degree of technical skill with a truly amazing

talent for bringing himself and his works to the attention of the public and keeping them there.

With the passage of the years it has become clear that Nash's substantial contribution toward furthering the cause of fine printing in the West lay not so much in the books he printed—for not many collect them today—as in the skill by which he publicized himself and his productions, thereby opening up a new field of interest to the booklovers of the area; namely, the collection of well-printed limited editions.

OSCAR LEWIS

DOROTHY ABBE, *Prelude to Eden*. Harry N. Abrams, N.Y. 1970. 302 pp. \$37.50 through Dec. 31, 1970, \$45.00 thereafter.

Fifteen years ago, some local members may recall, the Club paid homage to Miss Dorothy Abbe at an Open House on May 6, 1955. This remarkable lady was an associate of the renowned graphic designer W. A. Dwiggins (affectionately known as WAD) during the last ten years of his life. In the middle 50's, Miss Abbe was responsible for two book shows at the Club—both on Dwiggins—and an earlier show, *Printing Uninhibited*, which she directed and the Club sponsored at the San Francisco Public Library. In her own right, Miss Abbe is an outstanding designer-printer and a noted photographer and artist. Her book, *Prelude to Eden*, a Dwiggins drama for marionettes, is a typical example of her ability in delightful design and printing.

Dwiggins' making of marionettes and puppetry is a relatively unknown facet of this extraordinary virtuoso who was internationally known as a calligrapher, type-designer, book-designer and artist. And because few people knew this unusual side of WAD, Miss Abbe set out to do something about it. She wrote, designed and photographed all of Dwiggins' puppets, his designs for scenery, his stages and lighting innovations and produced, privately (over a period of some ten years) four copies, 236 pages in five volumes. "Five volumes," she writes, "because of the weight of more than 375 photographic prints mounted on five-ply Strathmore." In addition she included 66 color transparencies mounted in such a way as to be incorporated into the book as "color plates." She adds, "A good way for an author to keep down wordage, is to set and print his copy. This I did in Bulmer on a 11 x 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ inch page, on a 8 x 12 Chandler & Price press. Another reason for four copies!"

This pilot work came to the attention of Harry N. Abrams, the New York publisher of fine art books, who undertook to publish it. One of Miss Abbe's four copies was dismantled—"making such changes and

repro proofs as were necessary in order to turn five volumes into one.”

The result, as printed in gravure for the publisher in Japan, is a magnificent folio the same size as the original pilot model, and this is now 302 pages with 368 illustrations including 67 plates in full color! This is one of the most opulent books this reviewer has ever seen. It is a significant contribution to puppetry and a “must” to any and all collectors of the work of William Addison Dwiggins.

The book will retail for \$37.50 through December 31, 1970 and for \$45. thereafter.

Gallimaufry

WE REGRET to inform you that Dorothy Whitnah is leaving her position in the Club after nine years as Executive Secretary. We welcome Teresa Fryworth who will take her place.

AN ERROR occurred in the last issue of the Quarterly News-Letter: Frances Case Theiss was credited as receiving her Master of Arts degree from San Francisco State College. It should read San Jose State. Our apologies to Mrs. Theiss.

THE ALLEN PRESS of Kentfield, California, has just completed *The Book of Genesis* in a de luxe edition limited to 140 copies. It was produced entirely by hand: Unciala types hand set; and hand made Umbria paper from Italy printed damp on a Columbia handpress. Using the King James Version, the book was designed to be read as living literature: to present in straight prose the beauty of the text, thus circumventing the complicated Biblical typography of numbered sentences. This edition of *Genesis* is complete except for genealogical tables and a few historical notes. There are 24 dramatic, full-page engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton. There are approximately 120 pages, 13 by 9 inches, with two or three colors on every page; and each page carries decorative headings in Hebrew calligraphy—sentences from the first chapter of *Genesis*. The binding is especially handsome, consisting of a luxurious emerald green and gold Fortuny print of Iranian design, hand-blocked in Venice; the book is enclosed in a slipcase covered with a special cloth from Paris. This is the 35th limited edition from The Allen Press of Lewis & Dorothy Allen, and they believe that it marks the high point in their plan to present enduring texts with meticulous hand-craftsmanship, using the finest materials obtainable. The price is \$100.00 per copy.

Notes on Publications

A special order envelope is enclosed in this issue of the Quarterly. We have listed Book Club publications available for CHRISTMAS giving. Your orders will receive our prompt and grateful attention. All Book Club publications are in limited editions and sold to members only.

Printing as a Performing Art, edited by Ruth Teiser, has proved to be one of our most popular publications. As a result we are sorry to report the edition sold rapidly and we have been unable to fill late orders and orders for second copies. We are naturally pleased that the book created so much interest and extend sincere regrets to our many disappointed members.

Elected to Membership

The following have been elected since the publication of the Fall Newsletter:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
Sanford L. Berger	Berkeley	James D. Hart
Charles B. Boyer, III	Dayton, Ohio	Michael Harrison
James S. Bradley	Sacramento	Michael Harrison
Herbert Caplan	Sacramento	Michael Harrison
George Wesley Epidendio	San Rafael	Warren R. Howell
Neal F. Grenley	Tacoma, Wash.	Membership Committee
Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert S. Haselberger	Cincinnati, Ohio	Lester Roberts
Michael Hoffman	Oakland	Frank Chambers
Prof. Rudolph M. Lapp	San Mateo	James D. Hart
T. Kevin Mallen	Palo Alto	Sidney L. Schwartz
Clay C. McKinney	APO, New York	Warren R. Howell
Mrs. John McNamara	San Francisco	Madeleine S. Rose

The two classifications of membership above Regular Membership are Patron Memberships, \$100 a year, and Sustaining Memberships, \$30 a year. The following has entered the Club as a Sustaining Member.

Edward M. Lindsay	Oakland	Mrs. John K. DuMont
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The following have changed from Regular to Sustaining Membership:

Francis L. Auger	San Rafael
R. N. Kauffman	Hillsborough

Book Auction

Members may be wondering what has happened to the Book Auction which we planned for this Fall. Unfortunately, to date we have not received enough books to warrant printing a catalogue. The response to our plea in the Spring and Summer issues of *The Quarterly News-Letter* was rather poor; we received only about 75 items. We need twice that number to make a fine representative sale.

To refresh your memories, the reason for an auction is to replenish the Club's coffers, since the remodeling of the premises cost a great deal more than we budgeted.

So, dear Member, if you have not already responded to our cry for books—*good* books—won't you please do so as soon as you can. Thank you.

For the convenience of members in Southern California, Dawson's Book Shop, 535 Larchmont Blvd, Los Angeles, has kindly offered to act as a depository for such books as any members in the area care to give. This will save donors the trouble of wrapping their gifts.

We now plan to hold the auction in the Spring of 1971.



Joseph Rubinstein announces his translation from Tucson, Arizona. Books and manuscripts: Medieval, Renaissance, History of Science, Latin-America, and other subjects as chance commands.

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Each book is limited to an edition of 1,500 numbered copies for sale throughout the world, but is offered in a choice of two bindings, a full binding in superlative leather and a cloth binding using the best bookbinding materials that are available. The books are collectors' editions which will never be reprinted in this distinguished form.

Of the series Sir Francis Meynell has said '... for those who believe, as I do, that there is still a worthwhile role for limited editions in this age of the "mass media" and the "communications industry" the first publications of The Fraser Press should be welcome'.

The six titles now available are: *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais, *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Nostromo* by Joseph Conrad, *A Tale of a Tub* by Jonathan Swift and *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens.

The Fraser Press limited editions are published by Gordon Fraser, Fitzroy Road, London NW1, England.

*"... if I were making a visit
to the Mother Lode tomorrow,
this is the book I would
reach for first, and
be most sure I took
along and consult
most often."*

—Wallace Stegner



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Announcing for Publication December 10, 1970

Origins of Hydraulic Mining in California by Philip May

The contribution of hydraulic mining to the California gold product is impossible to calculate with precision, yet one may safely say that from its inception in 1853 to Judge Lorenzo Sawyer's decision of January 1884, which effectively ended large-scale hydraulicking in the northern Sierra gold belt, hydraulic mining contributed at least one-quarter of California's gold yield. With questionable effectiveness it solved the problem of working low-grade Tertiary gravels.

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The author,

Philip Ross May, is a New Zealander who spent a year's study leave in California in 1967. He is a member of the History Department, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, though currently finishing a two year period as a Senior Research Fellow in History at the Australian National University, Canberra. His previous publications include a book, *The West Coast Gold Rushes* (1962 and 1967), and two smaller works, *Hokitika, Goldfields Capital* (1964) and *Gold Town* (1970).

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